

# Maple Run Could Have Been Better This Year

By Eric Johnson

**Tucker Mountain Maple Cooperative**

As the final cleaning up in the sugar house is completed, there is time to look back on the 2005 maple sugaring season. The general consensus from several maple producers in the Andover area was that it was both a late season in terms of timing and a low season in terms of overall syrup production.

Traditionally the maple season gets underway in the Andover area around the end of February. This is generally when the weather begins to get warm enough during the day for the sap to begin flowing. Daytime temperatures above freezing (ideally in the mid 40s) and nighttime temperatures below freezing are the best for sap production.

This season, many local producers waited until after Town Meeting to tap, and most did not do their first boil until around the third weekend in March. This puts the season a full two weeks behind what is considered normal for this region of New England.

The following are a few "snapshots" of the season from local producers.

David Pilla, Woodlands Manager for Proctor Academy, placed his taps (or "tapped out") this year in the third week of March. He oversees Proctor's sugarbush, which totals roughly 300 taps. (A tap is one hole and bucket or tubing set-up for collecting sap. Larger trees can carry several taps, while smaller trees traditionally have only one.)

Students are active participants in the sugaring process at Proctor, and all told, production this year was 22 gallons of syrup. This is down significantly from a typical season which sees them producing closer to 50 gallons of syrup. Dave also noted that the grade of the syrup was down a bit this year as compared to others.

Everett Jones, a sugarer who lives on Maple Street in East Andover, also

noted that the grade of syrup seemed to be lower this year. Everett operates a 300-tap sugarbush which is located just up the hill from where the power lines cross Maple Street. He tapped out during the first week of March, but didn't get enough sap for his first boil until late in the third week of March. His total production this year was 33 gallons, also down from his more normal production of 50 gallons.

Jeff Sweet, along with two of his brothers, operates Sweet Maples Sugarhouse in Newbury. They are a larger, commercial operation, collecting sap from their own 2,300-tap sugarbush. In addition, they purchase sap from other producers, bringing their total up to 3,300 taps.

The season also started late for the Sweet Maples folks, with their first boil coming on March 16, more than two weeks later than last year. According to Jeff, "For us, every other year has been good and bad, and this was our bad year in the cycle." This year's total production of 330-plus gallons of syrup was down by more than half from last year.

In our own 150-tap sugaring operation, the Tucker Mountain Maple Cooperative in East Andover, we also didn't get our first boil until the end of the third week in March. Our biggest run came on Easter Sunday, March 27, when we produced nearly five gallons of syrup from over 200 gallons of sap. Our total production for the season was 19 gallons. As this was our first year in regular production, it's difficult to tell if this was a typical year or not for us.

In general, it appears to have been an "off" year for local maple syrup producers. While some of the maple sugaring process is well understood by scientists and foresters, much is still unexplained. It's that combination of knowns and unknowns that makes sugaring all the more interesting and opens up the possibility of an excellent year in 2006.

# The River Is Wide...

By Janet Plummer  
For the Beacon

*Janet bought Sterrett Sleeper's house in Cilleyville and is still learning the many moods of the Blackwater River.*

Ho hum, Sunday morning. Finally, a good night's sleep, even with six girls for a sleepover. The teenage din had become white noise by 1:00 AM, and I had snoozed until almost 10:00. Stumbled downstairs to feed the dog and the bunny, and gazed out a back window. Gazed out the window, yes, down to the river, and noted something amiss. The river, the Blackwater, yes, missing... Holy cow!

It was missing, that is, in its ordinary form. Instead, a moved lake rushed by swiftly, up and over the far bank and away into the woods. I

peered downstream – current – and I peered upstream – torrent – and then I stepped outside and rounded the corner of my house.

Noise like a roaring freight train assailed my ears as I realized I had not been awakened by the wind but by the river itself as it rushed under the Cilleyville bridges and cut the left corner, reaching down past houses high up and yards too low.

Snow floes sailed by, and tall trees, almost uprooted, leaned across ominously. While leafpack fell into the streams, branches of deadwood swam alongside. All day, even after scouting further down Andover way, I leaned into my house walls and thanked heaven this newcomer had bought a house, anchored by ancient white pines, on high ground.

# Kids' Spring Fishing Derby

By Rich Gross  
**Andover Fish & Game Club**

The Andover Fish and Game Club's 10th Annual Kids' Spring Trout Fishing Derby will be on Saturday, May 14, at Highland Lake in East Andover. This is for kids 15 and under. Registration starts at 7 AM at the Andover Fish & Game clubhouse by the channel. You can begin fishing from then until 11 AM. Please bring your own

fish poles and bait.

There will be plenty of food and drink, with lucky prizes, ribbons, and trophies to be handed out. There will be a stocking on Friday, May 13, but due to circumstances beyond our control we cannot pin down a time. We are very sorry.

Please come and enjoy the day. Hope to see you there. If you have any questions, call 735-5311.

# Soo-Nipi Audubon Events

Come see the much publicized "Polar Bears of Churchill" at the Soo-Nipi Audubon Chapter meeting on Friday, May 13, at 7:30 PM at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in New London.

Speaker Bob Crane will show a combination of slides from two different trips to provide us with a cross section of polar bear behavior: mothers with cubs, adolescents play fighting, and older males out on the ice.

This program is open to the public and refreshments will be served. For more information contact Ruth White at 763-4893.

**Birdathon**

On Sunday, May 22, Peter Newbern will lead the Soo-Nipi Audubon Chapter Birdathon to help raise funds for chapter programming. Participants will meet at the Cricenti's Market parking lot in New London at 8:00 AM to begin the tally of bird species in the local area.

Solicitations may be sought for individual bird species or a blanket donation may be made. Be sure to bring binoculars. Inclement weather cancels the trip. For details call Peter Newbern at 763-4308.

**Got News?** Mail@AndoverBeacon.com or PO Box 149 or 735-6099

## Hillside Orchard Greenhouses

**Directions:**

From Route 11 in East Andover, turn onto Flaghole Road. Follow the signs three miles to Hillside Orchard Greenhouses.

**Hours:**

Open Tuesday through Sunday, 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM. Closed Mondays.

**Open For The Season  
On May 5**

**Flower & Vegetable Plants  
Pansies • Perennials  
Geraniums • Hangers  
Licorice • Vinca • Dracaena**

**Gift Certificates Available**

**We will be open on Memorial Day, Monday, May 30th**



Sage Fly Rods, Ross Reels, Simms Waders, Clothing, and Boots, Rio, Sci Angler, & Teeny Fly Lines, Saltwater & Freshwater Flies, Korkers Footwear, Fishpond Fly Vests and Gear, Sage Luggage, & more!

Jon Lockwood, Owner; Elkins, NH; Call 536-9299 Anytime!

[www.nhfishguide.com](http://www.nhfishguide.com)